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DISCOURSE

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF

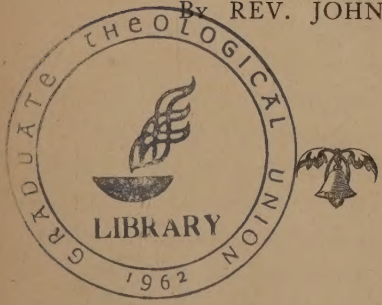
CONVERS FRANCIS, D.D.

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

First Congregational Society, Watertown,

APRIL 19, 1863.

By REV. JOHN WEISS.



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DISCOURSE.

WE always take pleasure in surmises concerning the real or possible advantage which death secures to a departed spirit, — the filing of the fetters, the conscious harvesting of a whole life's experience by rekindled youth, the escape of powers from a falling tenement into a great open country where summer broods and quickens, the happy and playful use of long-exercised and chastened gifts. We think of likeness welded to its like in the heat of that moment which dissolves the earth's restrictions; an old affection is reclaimed, or an old discord melts into some predestined harmony. Wherever the body has encroached, or life has cramped like a vice, we imagine the spirit emancipated. For however much a man may triumph in the act of living, and of using all his powers in a genial and noble way, as if he had subsidized everything to

1620

secure a great career, he cannot help listening at death's door, and his fingers tremble in lifting the latch, with eagerness more than with age.

Every man who dies enters instantly into the satisfaction of our own hopes. There is a moment when he is naked; the next moment he is clothed upon with our house that is from heaven.

But if all these were illusions which the friend dissipated by dying, he invests by that act us who remain with real and permanent advantages. What dull periods, sometimes of years, we pass close to those whom we will admire and love if we can only get a chance to think of it! If rainy days keep friends at home, they do not always chafe for each other's society. Death often gives us the first chance we have to deeply appreciate and admire. A friend's soul suddenly bursts his sheath; we knew there was purple there, for it dawned on the edges; there was wealth in the bud, but reserve also, the limits of the individual; our friendship was continual expectation of enjoyment. But some morning the blossom spreads wide open, and its perfume cannot stay. We crowd, like bees, we ravage every leaf, we load ourselves with the wealth, and it becomes sweetness transferred to our own cells. Mem-

ory rifles nothing so completely as a character laid open by death: and when friendship grieves, it often comes into possession of more than it ever enjoyed.

How the memory clings and buries itself! it is growing heavy with a friend; at length it moves away faint and embarrassed, for there is nothing left to delay it.

This is a faithful and a useful office. We always do well to gather in this way around worth and goodness when they give us by dying their best surprise, which they had kept back so long.

At such times we do not extol nor flatter; we assimilate. Flattery is content with hovering over scentless flowers. But we want to be friends with whatever is excellent, and to possess neither more nor less than these simple facts of a good life.

So I thought to inhale, as I stood by the coffin of your old pastor, where a blossom seemed to spread as in a vase, some of the sweetness of a character, not so great and famous, not so electric and penetrating, but healthy, hearty, young and simple, truthful and obedient, high-minded and sincere. I thought that my sense was saluted by the rarity of some moral gifts, and a kind of greatness which many a well-known name can never repre-

sent for us. Perhaps they will draw us as they are lifted up.

The history of a man's childhood is an intelligible preface to the substance of his maturity. Nothing is trivial or beneath our notice if it betrays the nature of the soil and what crops it may be expected to produce.

Richard Francis, the first of that name who came to America, settled in Cambridge about the year 1636. He was made Freeman in 1640. His gravestone, which announces that he lived eighty-one years, "or thereabout," and died on the 24th of March, 168§, is still standing in the Old Cambridge burying-ground, where it was reset and its inscription deepened by the pious care of his descendant.

No further traces of the family exist, till we reach the grandfather of Dr. Francis, who was a weaver by trade. He was an ardent "liberty man," an excellent marksman, and is reported to have killed five of the enemy in Concord fight. He served in the war four years, passed through various battles and skirmishes, and shared all the sufferings of the field. Upon procuring his discharge he returned to find his family destitute, but he immediately resumed his

trade, which was then a good one, because no cloth was imported. His wife was Lydia Convers, an orphan, who was adopted and brought up by her uncle, Dr. Convers of Woburn. They had ten children, of whom the fourth, named Convers, was the father of Dr. Francis. The father's education was of the scantiest description, for two months was the longest period ever devoted to his annual schooling. His teacher begged hard for more time in his behalf, but in vain, for the old weaver was obliged to keep him at home for the sake of his labor. But he was fond of reading, and did a good deal for himself in after life. In his fifteenth year he was apprenticed to a baker in Medford, where he remained till he was twenty-one. The baker's sons used to help him at his reading, writing, and ciphering, in the intervals of leisure; but he had to work very hard, and was not gently treated. After he became of age he was a journeyman baker for six years; he then set up for himself in West Cambridge, which was then called Menotomy. He married Susannah Rand before he was quite twenty-two years old, and she was of the same age. "She had a simple, loving heart, and a spirit busy in doing good."

Dr. Francis was born in West Cambridge, November 9,

1795, the fifth child of six. The family soon removed to Medford, where his childhood and youth were passed. The father built a new house and bakery, and moved into it during the year 1800, and Convers could just recollect the stir and excitement of that occasion. Long afterward he visited the house. "I stood in the chamber where my mother died, and my eyes were dim with tears. I went to the little chamber where I slept and studied, and a dreamy sadness came over me, sweeter than any present enjoyment, — to the bake-house, and how the hours of work there came back as fresh as yesterday! — to the garden, and how the tears again started when I remembered how my dear mother used to take me out there to help her dig and weed in the flower-beds! Mysterious and affecting ties, which link the soul fast to the spots where it has once loved, wrought, or grieved!"

He derived from the schoolmistress his next early impression. Her name was Elizabeth Francis, but she was not connected with the family. Among the children and townspeople she was known as "Ma'am Betty," — a spinster of supernatural shyness, the never-forgotten calamity of whose life was that Dr. Brooks once saw her drinking water from the nose of her tea-kettle. Her school

was kept in a small, low room, which contained her bed, stove, and all her worldly goods. Convers's mother used to send him to fill the old lady's water-pail, cut her wood, and run her errands. He also would read to her in the long winter evenings things that she liked, story-books and theological publications, so that he stood high in her regard. The people used to vex him with reporting that Ma'am Betty said "she was dreadful fond of Convers and cheese." Years after, when Mr. Francis preached his first sermon in Medford, the old lady, who was still alive, but too feeble to go to meeting, inquired what hymns he read, "and when one of them was mentioned, 'Ah,' said she, 'I taught Convers to say that hymn when he used to go to school.'"

She chewed a great deal of tobacco, and her room was never tidy, but in teaching the future scholar his letters, she began the clearing out of that orderly and methodical mind.

When he left her dingy room, which was chiefly famous to him on account of some flowered bed-curtains in minute needlework, the wonder of the neighborhood, he was launched into the terrors of the town-school. Some of the teachers only appalled his gentle mind; others did

him a lasting service. Among these he remembered chiefly Daniel Swan, afterwards Dr. Swan of Medford, who is still living. "He did more to kindle my mind than any other teacher, and I think I owe to him the impulse that brought out my love of learning." Convers carried home a great many of the "picture pieces" which Daniel Swan offered as prizes for excellence: these were large sheets of paper bordered with engravings of Scripture scenes and Valentine and Orson, which the pupil filled with specimens of his own penmanship.* In whatever required memory, Convers held superiority over the whole school.

He overflowed with a frolic vein, loved dearly all the out-door sports of childhood, such as cricket, prison-bar, and bass; he went into footballing with so much impetuosity as to get often bruised and lamed. At building and defending a snow-fort he was a choice hand. But he practised skating with a kind of rapture, for his enjoyment of that exercise was largely pilfered from the sparkling wintry nature

* "Among those who broke the path into knowledge for me there was, I think, no real *Orbilius*, — at least, no one to whom *plagosus* could be applied as Horace applies it to his schoolmaster (Ep. lib. 2. 1. 70):

> 'Non equidem insector, delendaque carmina Livi
> Esse reor, memini quæ plagosum mihi parvo
> Orbilium dictare.'"

of the scene. Long afterwards, in recalling his moonlight pleasures upon skates, he quoted the only picturesque lines that are to be found in Wordsworth's Prelude: —

> "So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
> And not a voice was idle; with the din
> Smitten, the precipices rang aloud;
> The leafless trees and every icy crag
> Tinkled like iron, while far-distant hills
> Into the tumult sent an alien sound
> Of melancholy not unnoticed, while the stars
> Eastward were sparkling clear, and in the west
> The orange sky of evening died away."

And he liked the next lines because they recalled a habit of his own: —

> "Not seldom from the uproar I retired
> Into a silent bay, or sportively
> Glanced sideway, leaving the tumultuous throng
> To cut across the reflex of a star
> That fled, and, flying still before me, gleamed
> Upon the glassy plain."

A great many hours of his childhood were spent in the society of his uncle James, who had been made blind by a violent attack of small-pox; and who lived for many years in his brother's house. Convers had to read to him, and the books followed the changes of a somewhat capricious mind; for the uncle liked to shift his theological positions, as this

was the only change of place he could make without a guide. When the uncle was of a Baptist persuasion, Convers had to read Bunyan's works, "The Pilgrim's Progress," "The Siege of the Town of Mansoul," "Grace abounding to the Chief of Sinners," "Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ." When the novelty of Universalism attracted him, a fresh deposit settled into Convers's mind from Winchester's "Dialogues on Universal Salvation," and "Lectures on the Prophecies" by the same author. These had none of Bunyan's dramatic power, and were so insufferably tedious to the boy that he used to turn over half a dozen leaves at once; but when the blind uncle felt the clew twitched away from him, he would say, "Convers, have n't you missed some of it? there don't seem to be any connection." So it all had to be read, as salvation depended on it.

Whenever the uncle wanted to go out and walk, Convers took his hand and guided him. How many hundred miles he trudged gently and helpfully by his side! During the Baptist rage, they would frequently walk to Boston to hear Dr. Baldwin preach at the North End. But the uncle was full of conversation, and paid his toll to Convers all the way.

There were very few books in the father's house; an odd volume of Cowley, Orton's "Expositions of the Old Testament," Forbes's "Family Book," some histories of England and of the Revolution, and Watts's "Improvement of the Mind," formed the contents of the little book-case. The spiritual department of this library was anything but a source of refreshment to this healthy boy, whose means of grace lay in making a good deal of noise on Sunday when he had to stay at home. "Go and sit down in that chair and keep still," cried the father over the edge of the family Bible. Then Convers would manage to get into the garret and exchange his good book for something more congenial. "I think the deepest and most living impressions of religion were made upon me by some pleasant little story-books, or still more by the spontaneous feelings and thoughts that visited my childish heart. For such feelings and thoughts I remember distinctly to have had, and often I went by myself into a corner of chamber or garret, and prayed to the Good Father above, from an impulse, the origin of which I do not remember, but it doubtless was the natural working of the God-given sentiment." It was indeed, and all his lore never choked the sweet outlet of that natural spring. The God within him always nourished

his religion more than the book without, though that book may have been a history of religion.

"The thought of hell sometimes gave me a mysterious and distressing feeling, and I tried to think I was a great sinner and to confess it to God." But that was hard work for him, as he did not sin. "What can a healthy, happy, well-meaning child know or believe of hell? Let the child alone with God, and Nature, and his own blessed heart."

The only attempt upon a large scale which Convers made to be conventional in matters of religion was when Dr. Osgood promised a pretty book to the boy or girl who would get the whole Westminster Assembly's Catechism by heart. The sight of the bright yellow-covered little book fired his heart with a desire for literary possession, and he went to work upon the Catechism so successfully that the Doctor adjudged the glittering prize to him. "Go to the town-school, my little fellow; I will send the book there to be given to you by the master before the whole school." What a charming sense of fame mixed with that of property! Down he went, and received his book. What did he find it to be? Only a copy of the Westminster Assembly's Catechism. That is generally the result of religious conventionalism; you get nothing but the forms you offer.

He was compelled to read the Bible in course from Genesis to the Apocalypse; and like an honest child he hated the task. "I can now see that the Bibliolatry of almost all theology has done a great deal of mischief; at that time I did not know what mischief it was doing to me by depriving these beautiful and glorious books of the interest they might have inspired, at least in their most natural and simple parts; it even created a sort of aversion for them, which it took a great while, and a change in my habits of thought, to overcome. If you take away the *human* element out of a book, — as well as out of a man, — you take away the charm, and can give nothing that will fill its place."

The passion for reading grew upon him, so that, when he was wanted for work, he had to be unearthed, for he was buried somewhere in a book. But the farm-work and bake-house-work followed him up sharply; and he learned to do a great many things; he had to make hay, weed the garden, set the hens, tend the shop, turn the "dumb-betty," and hang out the clothes. He could *break* and *mould* and *flat* and *dock*. They set him to wipe the crackers, for Medford crackers were an invention of his father. "How many hundreds upon hundreds of barrels of crackers did I wipe." Sometimes he was kept at home from school to do this

work. In this university he learned resolution and self-respect.

Influences from nature began to seek his boyish heart. "For a long time it was my business to drive the cows to pasture in the morning and go for them again at night. Sometimes the pasture for them was more than a mile from home, up the Andover Turnpike among the woods, and sometimes down Ship-yard Lane. Many were the reveries, the sweet and dreamy thoughts, I had on these morning and night excursions; the sky and the woods and the brooks came into the boy's soul, and shone and waved and rolled there; God was with him and he was with God, though he knew not of it, perhaps would have been almost frightened to have been told it was God."

One day in his fifteenth year he was waiting in the bakery for the bread to be ready to carry into the shop, when his father suddenly asked him, "Convers, what do you want to do? Do you want to learn a trade, or do you want to go to college?" Convers decided on the spot for college, not, however, without some nervousness. "Well, then, you shall go to college, and next Monday morning you may begin to attend Dr. Hosmer's academy, to be prepared." He heard this with a trembling glad-

ness, which vibrated through his life at every fresh recollection of that morning. Now in the winter evenings he shut himself up alone in the bake-house, because it was still and warm there; and, making a study-table of a flour-barrel, he kneaded his bread for college. From his first lesson in the Latin Grammar to the day of entering in 1811, there was only a year.* His sister remembers seeing him throw himself upon the bed and sob, "because some difficulty about a room or a boarding-place made him apprehensive that he might not be able to enter that year."

At this time he and his sister Lydia, who was several years younger, used to spend their spare hours together among his piles of books. She had begun to read things that were beyond her childish comprehension, and was constantly calling upon him to explain. "Convers, what does Shakespeare mean by this? What does Milton mean by that?" Sometimes he was roguish, and enjoyed a little mystification. Thus he made her believe that the "raven down of darkness," which was made to smile, was the fur of a black cat that sparkled because it was stroked the

* The required studies at that time were Adam's Grammar, the whole of Virgil, Sallust's two histories, Cicero's Select Orations; in Greek, the Gloucester Grammar, the New Testament, and Dalzel's Collectanea Minora; Arithmetic, and Geography.

wrong way; though why the word *down* should be used instead of *fur* continued secretly to puzzle her.

"A dear, blessed sister has she been to me: would that I had been half as good a brother to her! The writing of her first book, in a little chamber of my house at Watertown, I shall never forget." Nor shall we be likely to forget her books, wherever written.

He was not quite sixteen years old when he entered College. His class was the first which entered under the presidency of Dr. Kirkland. The division into which he was put for examination was composed of Exeter scholars, among whom he found Palfrey, Sparks, Underwood, Briggs, and Ingersoll: they were afterwards prized by him as classmates and friends. There is nothing to be recorded of his College career, beyond his sustained enthusiasm for study, except that he was appointed by his class to deliver the customary eulogy on occasion of the death of Daniel Sheppard, who was his chum; and that he occasionally kept school during the winter months; for a poor student could always have permission to spend the winter term in some country town for that purpose, while he pursued the studies of his class. Thus he kept a school in Wilmington during the winter of 1813–14.

After graduating he remained in Cambridge to study Divinity. There was at this time no distinct school, with its corps of Professors, which undertook to train young men for the ministry, but it had always been the practice of students in theology to reside in Cambridge, for the benefit of instruction from the University Professor of Divinity, to use the library and whatever other literary advantages the place afforded. The Professors of the University Faculty occasionally volunteered to instruct young men who were devoting themselves to theology. Mr. Willard taught Hebrew, Mr. Frisbie lectured on Ethics, and once a week there was an exercise with Dr. Ware, the Divinity Professor. Mr. Norton sometimes lectured on the Principles of Interpretation. I am informed by Dr. Palfrey, who studied Divinity with Dr. Francis, that the President had occasional meetings with them for instruction in Dogmatic Theology. There was a "Society for the Promotion of Theological Education in Harvard University," under whose auspices the sum of thirty thousand dollars was raised in 1816, the income of which was appropriated, by the Corporation of the College and the Trustees of the Society, to support young students of Divinity. Dr. Francis commenced studying

in this year. The first Visitation took place in 1817, at which time Dr. Palfrey read a treatise on Griesbach's Edition, but I find that Dr. Francis was approbated, to use a term of "infamous Latinity," by the Boston Association at a later date, and he well remembered his fright at having to read his first sermon over to Dr. Osgood of Medford, before preaching it in his pulpit in the autumn of 1818. In the winter of 1818–19 he preached at the North Church in Salem, during the sickness of Mr. Abbott.

The Rev. Richard Rosewell Eliot, a direct descendant from the famous John, had been the pastor of the church in Watertown for thirty-nine years at the time of his death in October, 1818. Mr. Francis supplied the pulpit occasionally, after his engagement in Salem had closed; and he was invited to become the successor of Mr. Eliot, on the 31st of March, 1819.

On the 12th of April the town concurred with the church in this invitation, and offered him a salary of one thousand dollars and a settlement of the same sum. The ordination took place on the 23d of June, in the old meeting-house, built in 1755, that stood so near the place where he and his wife now sleep. Dr. Osgood presided in the council. At that period of a developing Unitarian-

ism some disputing might have been expected between those members of the council who represented the new tendency and those who still expressed the old. But everything went off without an infraction of the peace. The Rev. Mr. Lowell made the first prayer, Dr. Osgood preached the sermon, President Kirkland made the consecrating prayer, Dr. Ripley of Concord gave the charge, the Rev. Mr. Palfrey gave the right hand of fellowship, and the Rev. Mr. Ripley of Waltham made the concluding prayer. Dr. Osgood was very polemical. Mr. Palfrey "surpassed his usual excellence." "God grant that my ministry in this town may be a long, a happy, and a useful one, and that many may have reason to bless the day when my union with this people was formed."

There are still some heads here left to contain the memory of that occasion, and some hearts to answer silently if the prayer of the good minister was effectual. I cannot describe his ministry. It is written upon a generation that has passed away. Perhaps to-day he reads his own record in the gathering of all those hearts to greet him, and to confess to him at last, after so many years of reserve, how much good he did to them, in many silent ways, even when he felt the humblest and the most

discouraged. I am thankful there is a place where these secrets of religious influence may be revealed to him: for he planted in tears. He stooped in gently furrowing the dull surface of the garden, and sowed in despondency fair names and letters in the ground. Now they stand all blossoming, wide open; and if he stoops, it is to gather the fragrance of his ministry.

But his record upon earth is blotted with the clouds of his humility and self-depreciation. There never was a man of such various learning, delightful converse, and refined philosophy, so absolutely unconscious of a personality. It seems at first as if more self-esteem would have enhanced his powers. But power is exercised in many ways, and when the pure in heart see God, He appears at their souls, as at a window, and the passers-by look upward.

How heavily the moods which are known in some degree by all clergymen weighed upon him! In a little diary of his sermonizing I find such traces as these. In 1821, he says once: "I found I did not feel sufficiently interested in preaching. God forgive me, that, when speaking on the most important subjects, I am so cold and indifferent. Where shall I find the remedy for that lassitude which habit induces?"

The next year he says once: "I do not know that my sermons were calculated to be useful, and this doubt distresses me with regard to most of my sermons. . . . . My mind is filled and pressed with anxious thoughts which indispose me for my duties, and it distresses me very much that I am subject to such fluctuations, for it shows that my heart is not absorbed as it ought to be in my great work. I am almost discouraged, — God forgive me."

In 1823: "This day, particularly in the forenoon, I felt a total want of interest in the services, or, in the language of the Methodists, 'was shut up.' I was impressed with the consciousness that the audience had no sympathy with me; this might not have been so, but when, from whatever cause, this feeling gets possession of the mind, it has a most palsying effect."

In 1826: "So I go from Sabbath to Sabbath, nobody caring what I preach, and to most of my people, probably, a post, if it could be made to utter any sounds, would do as much good as I do. . . . . The voice of commendation, I might almost say of kindness, is so utterly a strange thing to me, that when it comes it fills my eyes with tears."

Under the pressure of this despondency, born of his

temperament, but nourished and made morbid by clerical routine, he preached in this place for twenty-three years, with scarce one interval of relaxation, lecturing and holding extra services in the fashion of the times, and performing an abundant amount of pastoral labor that was never lessened by his passion for books and for all scholarly delights. Who would have suspected that this healthy, jocund man, always overflowing with a kindly humor, whose laugh seemed to be doing injury to a clergyman somewhere, but not to himself, had a heart that was swept by sullen clouds, and frequently engulfed in ennui and profound dissatisfaction? There is a disease not peculiar to New England, but grievously aggravated by the climate, which undermines the finest dispositions and sets them crumbling. Young aspirations become commonplace, impulsive hearts grow conventional and chary, sermons run to leaves and prayers to wood, something crowds and oppresses the free moments of the spirit, the whole manly vigor is let down, just as inevitably as when a sensual indulgence gnaws the nervous fibre. This disease is a tendency of Pulpit to the Brain. Like every case of excessive indulgence, it suggests its own obvious remedy, — moderate public use of spiritual gifts, less frequent demonstration of the religious sensibility, a dimin-

ished popular craving for the stated dram, fewer visits to the pew and vestry, a complete reorganization of the preaching exigency, according to the laws which preserve all intellectual and spiritual qualities in elastic vigor. Then perhaps there will be a greater tendency of Brain to the Pulpit.

Dr. Francis complained of the demoralizing effect of incessant sermon-writing. His whole temperament demanded ample breathing-spaces of repose, that he might reach his favorite subjects with a less languid and distrustful step. There is nothing peculiar in his experience, but its results in such a persistently self-depreciating disposition were peculiar.

In the spring of 1822 he brought home to Watertown his wife, whom he married on the 15th of May. She was a daughter of Rev. Dr. Allyn of Duxbury. For more than thirty-seven years, amid much ill-health and many fitful moods of the body, she was the cultivated friend of his leisure, the ready companion of all his pastoral labors, the dear resource of many gloomy days.

Let his own words of a later date supply us with fit allusion to the hidden feeling of his wedded life.

May, 1861. "Again to the hallowed spot in the Watertown village graveyard. The place where her re-

mains lie is now neatly sodded, with flowers growing over her bosom, — that bosom which it was a large part of my happiness to repose upon. The trees and bushes are well trimmed, and everything there looks neat, simple, and appropriate, *simplex munditiis*, — words, by the way, which I remember to have applied years ago as descriptive of her character and tastes, greatly to her delight.

"I was alone, save with her silent presence. A little poem of Barry Cornwall's came home to my feelings with a wonderful sweetness, while the family thoughts were nestling about my heart: —

'Touch us gently, Time!
Let us glide adown thy stream,
Gently, as we sometimes glide
Through a quiet dream.
Humble voyagers are we,
Husband, wife, and children three;
One is lost, — an angel, fled
To the azure overhead.

'Touch us gently, Time!
We've not proud nor soaring wings;
Our ambition, our content,
Lies in simple things.
Humble voyagers are we
O'er life's dim, unsounded sea,
Seeking only some calm clime:
Touch us gently, gentle Time!'"

His quiet life in Watertown was made eventful by thoughts and books. Beneath the ministerial routine a current from the past ran deep and clear, conducted by a living instinct for truth and beauty from all the famous fountains. There are ample indications of this interior life.

Take as a specimen the course of study for the year 1835.

The companions of this year were Platonic Henry More, Norris, Egerton Brydges's *Censura Literaria*, Cicero, Plato, Tacitus, Sophocles, Drake's book and others about Shakespeare to accompany a study of the plays, Coleridge's various works, Corrodi's *Geschichte des Chiliasmus*, Relandus *de Religione Mohammedica*, Herder's Spirit of Hebrew Poetry and of Christianity, Berger's *Moralische Einleitung in das N. T.*, Stillingfleet's *Origines Sacræ*, De Wette, Portalis, Ilgen, Eckerman, Lardner, Bauer, and Benjamin Constant.

The spare time was filled with the preparation of his biography of the apostle Eliot, which he wrote for Sparks's American Biography.

Cicero, Plato, Sophocles, and Tacitus were studied by him with enthusiasm, and some volume of theirs was constantly at hand.

"With what graphic power does Tacitus sketch events and characters! the stern brevity and dark majesty of his style, his impatience of words, which leads him to make each one bear as much meaning as possible, so that a whole picture is crowded into a line or sentence, the keen insight of his mind into the springs of action, which seems to rive, as it were, the very hearts of those who were the managers of great concerns, qualify him admirably for the period he has taken. The *lactea ubertas* of Livy (as Quinctilian calls it) is poor, compared with the severe, almost fearful power of Tacitus."

Trace also the liberal and spiritual thinking of these years.

1836. "I find that Geo. Ripley is publishing Discourses on the Philosophy of Religion; besides, Brownson is out with his New Views, and Alcott with Questions on the Gospels, for children. Then there is Furness's book, Remarks on the Gospels; so that it seems the spiritualists are taking the field in force. I have long seen that the Unitarians must break into two schools, — the Old one, or English school, belonging to the sensual and empiric philosophy, — and the New one, or the German school (perhaps it may be called), belonging to the spiritual philosophy. The last have the most of truth; but it will

take them some time to ripen, and meanwhile they will be laughed at, perhaps, for things that will appear visionary and crude. But the great cause of spiritual truth will gain far more by them than by the others."

In the autumn of 1836 there commenced a series of meetings of these liberal thinkers among the Unitarians, for the discussion of literary and spiritual subjects from the authority of reason and the intuitive perceptions of the soul. The club thus formed received the epithet "Transcendental" from some one of the members; a word derived from the philosophy of Kant, who appropriates it, in his "Critique of Pure Reason," to denote his exposition of *a priori* principles which furnish and limit all possible knowledge. By this name the club merely meant to indicate that it believed all necessary truths were derivable from internal, and not from external experience, from the primitive structure of the soul, and not from the secondary activity of the senses; but in the popular mind the name connoted all the crude and grotesque notions which dulness or malice could invent.

There is no better justification of the name to be found or devised than is given here by Mr. Francis, who was the senior member of the club.

" The life derived from a higher life, the incoming of power and help from above, — this has been man's feeling, persuasion, at all times, the world over. The volumes of heathen wisdom and religion are as full of it as the Christian. It is the spontaneous creed of divine affinities, the testimony, always speaking itself out, to the God in the man, which after all shames down materialism with its cunning arguments. It met me the other day in Pindar, — those lines so rich with divinity near the close of the Eighth Pythian Ode :

> Σκιᾶς ὄναρ, ἄνθρωποι· ἀλλ', ὅταν αἴγαλ
> Διόσδοτος ἔλθῃ,
> Λαμπρὸν φέγγος ἔπεστιν ἀνδρῶν
> Καὶ μείλιχος αἰών.

' Man is indeed the dream of a shadow ; but when a god-given beam visits him, then his own being glows with a bright radiance, and around him is a lovely world.' "

Here follow some traces of his intellectual and spiritual life.

" What time-shadows we live in and are surrounded by ! In a still, beautiful day, such as we have had this autumn, I hear the leaves break away from their stems, and see them fall with a gentle whirl to the bosom of earth. So have

the outward forms of men been dropping away around me, and the ever busy but silent work of decay has gone on. I hope that meanwhile my true being has not suffered loss. I hope even that its work has been a-doing, and its vitality been quickened. I hope — but how much more do I fear."

September, 1838. "Spent the night at Mr. Emerson's. When we were alone, he talked of his Discourse at the Divinity School, and of the obloquy it had drawn upon him. He is perfectly quiet amidst the storm; to my objections and remarks he gave the most candid replies, though we could not agree on some points. The more I see of this beautiful spirit, the more I revere and love him; such a calm, steady, simple soul, always looking for truth and living in wisdom and in love for man and goodness I have never met.

"Mr. Emerson is not one whose vocation it is to state processes of argument; he is a seer who reports in sweet and significant words what he sees. He looks into the infinite of truth, and records what there passes before his vision; if you see it as he does, you will recognize him for a gifted teacher; if not, there is little or nothing to be said about it, and you will go elsewhere for truth. But do not

brand him with the names of *visionary*, or *fanatic*, or *pretender:* he is no such thing, — he is a true, Godful man, though in his love of the ideal he disregards too much the actual.

"The next morning we talked chiefly on matters of natural science, where young Mr. R. was continually giving us information. I laughed heartily at a quotation made by Mr. Emerson in his quiet way. Mr. R. had told us of a naturalist who spent much time and pains in investigating the habits and nature of the louse on the cod-fish. 'O star-eyed Science,' said Mr. Emerson, 'hast thou wandered there?'"

October, 1838. "Is not that the very sublime of religious philosophy, which Plato says in his Theætetus: 'We cannot be free from evil while in this world, and therefore we ought to fly out of it as soon as possible. The way to fly out of it is to become as *like God* as we can. By becoming just, wise, and holy, we shall resemble him most. God is infinitely just, and there is nothing on earth so like him as a just man.'

"Shall I deem such truth as this the less divine, or the less inspired, because I find it in an ancient heathen? Had it been written within the covers of the Bible, it would

have been quoted with exultation as coming from God, and worthy to come from him; is it less so because it is written in Plato? Is there any measure of inspiration but the presence of divine truth in the spoken or written word, approving itself to the common consciousness of man?"

December 11, 1841. "T. Parker came in to spend the night. We had much good talk about matters of learning, &c. In religious things he seems, notwithstanding his reputation of infidelity, more and more pious every time I see him. A mind so affluent in learning and high thought I have never known."

February 12, 1842. "My studies this week have been in Plato, whose Republic I have finished, and in Aristophanes, whose Birds I have begun. What an admirable thing is that close of the tenth book of Plato's Republic! The defenders of Christianity are wont to say that the heathens had no faith in a future life. I would ask where in the Bible they will find the doctrine of immortality and of retribution more fully and beautifully drawn out than in that part of the Republic just referred to? As if the development of the soul — especially such development as it received under Grecian culture — did not necessarily involve the faith in immortality. If we are told that the

doctrine wanted the sanction of a divine authority in the teacher, and so was but a mere conjecture, then comes up the whole question concerning this thing called authority in the manifestation of truth to the soul, — a question not so easily despatched as some suppose."

At the same time he was writing a lecture upon Bishop Berkeley, reading Lentz's *Geschichte der Christlichen Homiletik*, Xenophon's Banquet, and pursuing Biblical studies, and Italian.

April 9. "Have read Dr. Channing's remarks on the Creole case, just published, — an excellent piece of argument, and breathing a pure moral spirit: it puts to shame the letter of our Secretary of State, Daniel Webster, and shows Channing in this case the better statesman of the two. Can it be that we shall have a war with England to sustain our slavery interest of the South? *Μὴ γένοιτο.*"

July 23, 1842. "On Thursday I preached the lecture in Boston, and the sermon, I believe, gave some satisfaction to those who have been disposed to accuse me of the horrible crime of transcendentalism! O the folly, as well as wickedness, of the *odium theologicum!* it is just as bad in the nineteenth as in the fifteenth or sixteenth

century, — just as bad among Unitarians as among the straitest of the Orthodox."

If we revert briefly to his ministerial life, we find the following reflections, written after the erection of a new meeting-house. They will have an interest for his old parishioners.

March 28, 1837. "In passing the site of our old meeting-house, I observed that yesterday and to-day the last remains of it had been levelled with the ground. The old spire came down, and the cock bowed his head to the dust, after having for so many years stood manfully up amidst the winds of heaven, and turned himself round with silent significance to the various points of the compass. So my old church has vanished from the list of existing things, and is henceforth to be only a remembrance. It was a work of art, the manifestation of the idea of certain artificers, who lived more than eighty years ago. There is an interest attached to the humblest forms in which the genius of man makes itself apparent in outward shapes, however rude or coarse. Every church, every dwelling-house, every utensil we use in domestic life, every garment we wear, is the expression of an idea, a fragment in the great world of art, which has been

building up ever since Adam. The individual forms and manifestations vanish; but art is ever reappearing, and clothing itself with other expressions. I believe, after all, I can never love my new church as I did the old one: it had some good historical associations; it had been consecrated by years of prayer and instruction; generations had come and gone, and had sought God and truth within its walls; old men were there, with their gray hairs, whose infant fronts had been touched with the water of baptism at that altar, and when we left it, it seemed to some as if the Sabbath were no Sabbath without it."

May 1. "Among other things, I helped to plant several trees on the hill around our new church."

This new meeting-house, in the planning and erecting of which he had taken so much interest, was destroyed by fire in the summer of 1841; and the tender-hearted pastor was deeply distressed at the calamity.

Writing to his niece, he said: "I intended to have written you some pleasant thing or other, if I could have laid hold of it. But everything of that sort is driven out of my head by the sad calamity which has befallen us. Our beautiful church is laid in ashes. The fire went on

with incredible rapidity, and the assistance was late in coming, so that it was impossible to save anything. I must say that I wept like a child to see a sanctuary so dear to my affections, and bound to all my thoughts by such pleasant and hallowed associations, going down in the flames."

In the spring of 1842 he received an invitation to fill the Parkman Professorship of Pulpit Eloquence and the Pastoral Care in the Divinity School: his modesty and self-distrust were serious obstacles to accepting it. But it is plain that such appeals as the following, which came from Mr. Parker, may be reckoned among the encouragements that helped his decision.

June 24, 1842. "I trust you have long before this made up your mind to go to Cambridge. I can't help thinking that the welfare of the denomination depends upon it. It seems to me to be the bloom and fruitage of your life, — your going thither and pouring out the learning you have hived up in diligent summers, and drawing from the wells of thought and emotion which you have so long frequented. I rejoice at it continually. The young men at the School, I learn, are much gratified with the arrangement. I know the intellectual and the

liberal party of the clergy — I am sorry it is a small number — will also rejoice at it."

July 2, 1842. "I hope you do not feel so anxious and disturbed as you seemed the other day. Truly it is a great step you are going to take, but a step forward in your duty, a step upward in your glory. I don't know how *you* regard the matter, but I confess it seems to me that your going to the Parkman Professorship in 1842 is as great a gain for the College and for the whole community as the accession of Dr. Ware was in 1805. Apart from all the difference between the *talents* and the *learning* of the two, it seems to me that you bear about the same relation to *the times* that Ware bore at that period. I cannot but think that this consideration, that you are now to devote your matured wisdom, and the stores of erudition, so carefully laid up, to the noblest work that can offer itself, will banish every cloud from your brow. . . . . I can't welcome you to a life of *ease* and *somnolence*. I wouldn't congratulate you on getting a *prebendary* with ten thousand pounds and nothing to do; but I must rejoice at the thought of your usefulness being so vastly increased, and I look forward to the cheering hopes you will waken in the minds of young men. Would to Heaven you had gone to Cambridge before I

went to the School! But I will be glad that others enjoy what I could not."

July 25. "I look forward to a brighter period in your life than you have ever rejoiced in before, when the wine of your life, hoarded and ripened in fruitful years, shall show itself worthy of its mark, and quicken the blood of youth, making their pulsations more generous than before."

And still later, after his removal to Cambridge: —

September 26. "Mr. Withington of the Divinity School has passed an hour or two with me, and told me what I knew must take place, namely, that the School already wears a new aspect, as it has a new soul; that you stimulate the dull and correct the erratic, and set right such as have prejudices inclining to narrowness, if not bigotry."

But the task of deciding to accept this professorship was not more difficult than that of leaving the parish where he had labored for nearly twenty-three years. He preached a farewell sermon on the 21st of August, 1842. "It was a deeply trying day to me; but I made my way through it with less distress than I had expected. It seemed like tearing up old roots and planting them again in a new place. Every family, every hill or valley, every walk in

my parish, has a history; and all these little histories of the heart come thronging upon me, and make a child of me. May the Head of the Church be gracious to my dear people, and send them a good minister of Jesus Christ to take the place hitherto so imperfectly filled by me. I have enjoyed much at Watertown; and though frequently saddened at the ill success of my ministry, have likewise had bright gleams of encouragement."

In December of the same year he writes: "I have been to a wedding in Watertown, and these visits and occasions among my quondam parishioners awaken my love of the former times and places. Shall I confess it, the artless people of a country parish interest me more than what are called intellectual people. Perhaps it is because these simple people loved me, and looked up to me as a guide. The longer I live, the more I weary of conventionalisms and mere intellect. I find little that deserves to be called wisdom, except the wisdom of an earnest, loving heart."

March 11, 1843. "Last Sunday I preached at Watertown, and administered the Communion to my former church. It was a day of great interest to me. My roots were struck so deep there, that when I am on the spot it

seems as if I must continue to grow there. They have not yet settled a minister in my place. I feel anxious about their welfare as a religious society. May God bless them and give them the spirit of love and of fidelity to the Gospel of Christ. I am sometimes distressed with thinking how little I did for them while I ministered there."

1848. "I find there is nothing I love so well as to preach to a plain country audience, a people without conventionalisms, and whose minds are not fly-blown with the silly love of criticism. I believe I was made for the country, and I could be well content, with my family and library, to live and die in the obscurest village. This would be an unintelligible confession to make to one of our Bostonians, whether clerical or lay, who seem to me to think as Mascarille does in Molière's *Precieuses Ridicules*, — 'Pour moi je tiens que, hors de Paris, il n'y a point de salut pour les honnêtes gens.'"

These gentle feelings still bound him to you. He was like a plant that, floating and blossoming elsewhere, grappled by long root-fibres to the spot where first it rose.

At the Divinity School he was expected, without an interval of repose, to assume duties that could only be thoroughly discharged by two or three Professors. A year or

two ought to be exclusively devoted to preparation for any professorship; but without this advantage, he began immediately courses of lectures and instruction on Ecclesiastical History, the Review and Criticism of Sermons, Composition of original Sermons, (with the Seniors,) Style and Composition, writing of Essays, the Doctrine and Office of Prayer, (with the Middle Class,) and Natural Theology with the Juniors. He also undertook an exercise in Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, with the Juniors. In addition to all these duties, he preached in the College Chapel and officiated at the daily prayers there half the time. But he complained that his mind was distracted by being obliged to move so incessantly among dissimilar subjects. There is no institution in the country so badly organized as the Cambridge Divinity School. And in saying this, honor is imputed to the scholars and gentlemen who have more than filled its professorships, and have done so much against untoward circumstances.

September 24. "Cambridge has become my home; and if I can but succeed in serving the cause of the Lord by helping to train true servants for his Church, it will be a happy home. But oh! that *if* distresses me."

Whenever Dr. Francis approached the young minds of

his classes, whether in lectures or conversations, his object was to impart a mental method and a spiritual freedom. There are two ways of stimulating a student: one is, by assailing him vigorously with your individual convictions; the other is, by showing him fairly the views of other men, emphasizing them as much as your own, till the young mind learns to make its first gestures in the act of deciding. Dr. Francis employed the latter way, partly from a cautious temperament and partly from an inherent impartiality which made him a gentleman in the realm of thought. He loved his own ideas, and had them of a decided, but always liberal kind: still he preferred to throw his scholars into the water, with the injunction to swim. It was impossible for him to conceal his bias for spiritual views of man and God; yet he seemed almost neutral when it came to the development of doctrines and the history of human opinions. Then he had so much to say about other men, that he called to mind the *nomenclator* whom the wealthy Romans hired to walk with them and name their clients. He could tell his classes all that had been advanced upon all the sides of great controversies; he knew the metaphysical and ecclesiastical history of human tendencies; he delighted to throw

these coins, that bear the mental stamp of different epochs, into his nice scales, and weigh them before the students' eyes. They sometimes suspected that he was dazzling with foreign wealth to conceal his own poverty of profound convictions. But he was teaching them to become observers, to sift, to weigh, to separate the facts, to classify. He longed to inspire them with a love for knowledge, and a respect for the human race whose innumerable deaths uprear the continent of truth. But they were often very impatient with him, for young Americans do not really love exhaustive study. They are looking for a short cut to a certain quantity of available intelligence, that they may be earning their living. We have a talent for inventing adroit patents, that grind out the heavenly intuitions, — time, labor, and money-saving contrivances to reduce truth within professional limits, — something like a sausage-machine to stuff the convolutions of the brain with moral and mental forced-meat, a slice of which can be clapped to fry at a moment's notice, and improvise a meal on the roadside or the prairie, by sea or land. We care less to learn to think and to discriminate, to extract honey from the bitter plants of ages that the draught of the present may be sweeter, to ennoble the mind with

the joys and agonies of all the past, than we do to get called to the bar, settled in a pulpit, mounted on a stump, and carrying about the average assortment in some pedler's cart.

Dr. Francis abhorred the slovenly and insincere methods of popular writers and thinkers; he saw that it nourished sectarianism and bigotry, and famished hearts to fill pockets. He sought to lay the courses of sound learning deep in the youthful mind, — a foundation upon which the man would be ashamed to build a shingle palace or to pitch an Arab's tent.

His love for books and for the thoughts of other men conspired to make this easy for him to do. Yet he sometimes did it under manifest constraint: and if he was unhappy during his professional career, it was partly because his knowledge worried his enthusiasm, and he longed to forget that he had to report a whole world full of thinking, and to begin telling all that he himself felt and believed.

He was also unhappy sometimes because the students misunderstood his method. He sat patiently shifting a lens and throwing color upon every side of a question, apparently dreading lest he shew himself instead of the question. Perhaps he was too modest, and might have

asserted himself oftener. But students think there is no instruction except by a person who is red-hot with some particular view of the universe, and they chafed at his tranquillity. Some of them came to the recitation-room ill prepared, and sat through this well-digested course with indifference: "all of which foolishness," says one of them, "he bore patiently, gently, and sweetly, never losing his interest in the young men, and always doing them more than justice when they made an effort to perform their duty." "I wish," he adds, "I could see him once more, to tell him how sorry I am for two or three wounds I inflicted on him. But if I should see him, his nobleness would shut my mouth."

"One or two unpleasant indications at the School have troubled me this week. The thoughtlessness of young men, even those preparing for the ministry, surprises me. I wish they knew how much they have my happiness in their power: I am sure they would be more considerate."

He was also made unhappy by the hostility of clerical and laical bigots, who dreaded lest a theology which put the soul above the Bible, and knowledge above any sect, would bring the Divinity School to harm. Their opposition was not noisy, nor did it ever get so far as to make defi-

nite points against his teaching. He was never aggressive enough in his style of teaching to call forth such hostility. But he felt that he was watched by this illiberal dread. The decided sectarians complained that he was not distinct enough, especially upon some points of historical Christianity: and yet, so far as the miraculous nature of Christ is concerned, he held the ordinary Unitarian belief. But how different some beliefs become in the hearts of genial, humble, tolerant, and scholarly men! It is acidity which the bigots mistake for distinctness: and the similarity of sound between *verjuice* and *virtues* is entirely theological. He was worried, and many difficulties were thrown in his way; but he planted his feet in walking just as he did before. The individuality of every student was respected by his impartial mind: he might, for instance, have urged more strongly his cherished ideas about the intuitive ability of the soul to perceive Divine truth; but on this, as on points of history, he trusted that knowledge was really an enlightener, and intellectual method really the great canvasser and arbiter.

His system lacked enthusiasm, and did not penetrate the students with the vital heat that Truth has when a lyrical rapture bears it through all hearts. Dr. Francis did not

possess imagination, so that his impartiality was colorless: it could only be duly appreciated by a mature judgment, that knows the worth of solid learning. Through his assimilating understanding the Past settled in a rich deposit over all questions, full of germs that wanted to be quickened by a tropical day. But fortunately he did not imitate the rhetorician, who substitutes a carnival rout for the rhythm of great truths, and hides the want of imagination by peddling a variety of sentiments. He had neither personal nor mental affectations. But the effect of his sincere liberality appears in the more generous attitude which of late years young preachers have taken in the Unitarian pulpit. If a student had original ability, he soon settled for himself what was substantial and what was accidental in the matter of religion, and he did not emerge from the School as the puppet of a little clique, nor to gratify local partialities.

1851. "I was impressed the other day with the following sentences in Cicero about the injurious effect of *authority* in the relation between teacher and learner: 'Non enim tam auctoritatis in disputando, quam rationis momenta quærenda sunt. Quin etiam obest plerumque iis, qui discere volunt, auctoritas eorum, qui se docere profitentur. De-

sinunt enim suum judicium adhibere; id habent ratum, quod ab eo, quem probant, judicatum vident.' * I have endeavored to act on this principle as much as possible in my duties at Divinity Hall. I have always told the young men that I wished to be with them as an elder brother, to go along with them in their studies and inquiries, giving such help and guidance as I could, not as a dictator, or authoritative teacher, displacing the action of their own minds to make room for that of mine, or giving them results to be accepted, instead of means and aids for arriving at their own results. This I have thought the true way; but I believe the way of *auctoritas* would have made me more popular, both among the students and in the Unitarian denomination, strange as it may seem. Most people like better to be told what to accept, than to be put upon finding it out for themselves."

Still it worried him to be obliged to adapt the movements of his understanding to his own theory of teaching. "On Wednesday I began to lecture again. There is something

* *De Nat. Deorum*, Lib. I. 5. "For in discussing anything, the weight of reasoning, and not of authority, should be sought, since the authority of those who profess to teach is on the whole a hindrance to those who wish to learn. For the latter cease to depend upon their own judgment, and take for granted the conclusions of those in whom they confide."

in this using the mind wholly *for others*, and with reference to others, which I do not like. It seems to nudge one's faculties on the elbow, and tell them that they are not to move at their own sweet will, but to produce a certain tale of brick for an employer. What would be the effect if the mind of every one were set free from tasks, and could flower out in musing, in speech, in writing, like shrubs and trees? We should have more true men and women, and fewer repeating-machines."

The young men in Cambridge who had the good sense to seek his society were debtors to him for more genial expressions of his inner life than the lecture-room could furnish. For it was in conversation that Dr. Francis exercised a peculiar charm. His humor and learning flowed forth in animated and graceful speech. His memory delivered, rapidly and smoothly, at the call of the moment, curious or pertinent knowledge, brisk anecdotes, the oddities and rarities of books. He was very much like Theodore Parker in his knowledge of the contents of books and his capacity to report them in sparkling and easy talk. You only had to tap him with a question, and the wine you wanted ran to order, as from the magic table in Auerbach's cellar. He did not clap over you the

extinguisher of a monologue. On the contrary, he was so suggestive that you wanted to talk also, and he gave you the opportunity, with that rare courtesy of exuberant memories which shows the absence of vanity. He listened to you as if you were his equal in variety and grasp of knowledge; he never tried to impose laws on the conversation, but took delight in submitting to it, to be carried away to fresh surprises. A man shows his morality in conversation. And here, as everywhere else, Dr. Francis appeared devoid of arrogance, self-esteem, self-assertion, and all oppressiveness. His knowledge was for the time being your best friend. When you drew up for a supply, he had a hilarious way of decanting himself, which was half generosity and half pleasure at his own abundance.

He always wanted to impart this wealth, to do you good with it; his personal economy became prodigality when he had something which he could spend to advantage. Simple, careful, and restrained in all his private tastes and expenditures, but munificent with his hoard of a lifetime, plunging both hands into it, and scattering it with smiles.

Books were his only luxury. He laid in wait for them in catalogues and auction-rooms, and carried off many a

rarity whose titles betrayed no value to less instructed purchasers. There are more curious books in his library of seven or eight thousand volumes, than in most other collections of twice or twenty times the size. But he carefully selected also the tools of his profession. Editions of the Greek and Roman authors, whom he knew lovingly and could quote with great felicity, stand by the side of theological and philosophical writers, selected on the principle of having the most and latest information. He sponged up the contents of a book at once. His favorite seal displayed a book underneath the motto, *Qui studet orat*, — "He prays who studies."

If you met him in the cars, you met also a queer book in his pocket. He would take it out and tell you all about it with a sparkle of fondness, as if it was a favorite child he had in charge.

It was not well to come in his way when he was engaged in running a book to cover. Accidentally I once bought a book upon which he was suspending a negotiation; and the mortification which he felt made the book extravagantly dear to me.

Speaking once of the limits which his purse put to book-buying, he quoted George Herbert's letter "To Sir J. D.":

"I protest and vow I ever study thrift, and yet I am scarce able with much ado to make one half-year's allowance shake hands with the other. And yet, if a book of four or five shillings come in my way, I buy it, though I fast for it; yea, sometimes of ten shillings. But alas, sir! what is that to these infinite volumes of divinity, which yet every day swell and grow bigger?"

November 22, 1851. "In the 'Elder Brother,' one of the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher, Charles the student thus describes the pleasures of his library:—

'Give me leave
T' enjoy myself; that place that does contain
My books, the best companions, is to me
A glorious court, where hourly I converse
With the old sages and philosophers;
And sometimes, for variety, I confer
With kings and emperors, and weigh their counsels;
Calling their victories, if unjustly got,
Unto a strict account, and, in my fancy,
Deface their ill-placed statues. Can I, then,
Part with such constant pleasures, to embrace
Uncertain vanities? No; be it your care
T' augment your heap of wealth: it shall be mine
T' increase in knowledge.' — Act I. Sc. 2.

In this spirited and loving plea for the pleasures of the library I may be allowed to feel some sympathy; for books

have ever been my dear, dear friends. But so far from its being any credit to me, I have been blamed for loving them too much. And there are some amongst the ministers who flout me for it, as an unpractical taste. Well, so be it. I know that my books have been my solace, my nutriment, and my discipline. Along with them I have cultivated an acquaintance with all common things of every-day life, and have always loved the society of farmers and mechanics better (in general) than that of so-called intellectual men, and I think I have learned more from them. My books, I know, have never made me unpractical, nor interfered in the least with my vital interest and persevering labor in the ministry.

"Thus much I feel bound to say for those treasures of the mind, embalmed in print, which, next to religion, have been the richest source of happiness to me, and for an acquaintance with which I thank God from my heart."

But if in this studious retirement one ear went listening from book to book for the voices of the past, the other ear gathered the clamor of the present, and reported the wrongs of suffering men to his heart. He was one of the earliest antislavery men. While John Quincy Adams fought the great battle for the Right of Petition, Dr. Francis waited

with an exulting mind that hailed the importance of the crisis. When he discovered that all the members of the Divinity School, upon his first arrival there, were Abolitionists, he thanked God for it; and when subsequently Divinity Students were not so unanimous upon that point, he lifted his voice against the conservatism of the place and the times. He was always very pronounced, very indignant and earnest, through all the changes of politics and parties, against the Northern men and preachers who called kidnapping Union-saving. He encouraged young men to keep their pulpits open to the step of the slave's wrongs. I remember when two or three prominent men of this parish poured their sorrows into his ear, after an offensive sermon had been delivered in this pulpit. He quietly listened to a description of the sentiments which had been avowed, and suddenly closed the interview by remarking, "Gentlemen, if I had the chance, I should say exactly the same things." He never left a young minister in doubt as to where he stood upon the great question of the country. He was full of it during the last interview I had with him, hardly more than a week previous to his departure, — full of enthusiasm, full of hope, anticipating a great future. And when he lay very near his end, he asked after a friend

who was then engaged in recruiting for the Negro Regiment: "How does he get on? It is a great work he is about. God bless him for it."

November 30, 1837. "Thanksgiving Day. Preached at home a rather ordinary sermon, to the last part of which, however, I gave some interest by expressing my indignation at the outrage recently committed at Alton, in Illinois, in the murder of Mr. Lovejoy for his abolition principles. I could not in conscience omit the notice of such an atrocity, which is in fact but one of a long series."

March, 1844. "Last evening the Divinity Students began a very interesting discussion of the Letter from the Unitarian Ministers of England to those of America on the subject of slavery.

"I was glad to find that almost all the School thought and felt strongly as antislavery men. Fenner said that Garrison, Wendell Phillips, Edmund Quincy, &c. were to these times what the prophets of old were to theirs. I said all I could to encourage them in their resistance to this sin of our land, and told them I hoped every member of the School would go forth into the ministry prepared to set his face as a flint against this terrible iniquity."

Here is an extract from a letter written at the time he

was endeavoring to raise money to purchase for the Divinity School the library of a foreign Professor : —

July 4, 1856. " That the claims of Kansas should have prevented the success of your labors for us is quite natural ; nor have we, I think, any cause of complaint. The great and holy battle which Freedom and Right are waging against the Devil ought to supersede, for the present at least, all other objects ; and if we could decide the issue against the accursed Slave Power by throwing our libraries into the flames, I would willingly make a holocaust of them and afterwards begin again.

" I rejoice that your parish and town are awake to the claims of this most righteous cause. They cannot do too much. I fear only that there is an apathy at the heart of our rich men about this matter, which will leave this great interest unprotected. They ought to pour out their money like water, and wait for another time to replenish their purses. People do not seem to be aware that a year from this time is to decide whether the whole future history of this country is to be written for freedom or for slavery."

This belongs to a later date : —

" The other day I wrote to Charles Sumner, thanking him with all my heart for his magnificent speech on the Bar-

barism of Slavery. This is by far the greatest speech — greatest, I mean, in all the highest qualities — which we have had in our Congress for twenty years. The compact and cumulative power of the argument is one of its chief merits; it is an admirable structure of thought and of facts, put together in an arrangement that gives it at once singular beauty and solid strength. To this add that fine moral eloquence which belongs to Mr. Sumner's nature, and there results such a specimen of forensic ability as is rare indeed. Some of the Republican prints are afraid that this grand effort will injure their cause, because it is so stringent and searching, and so offensive to the South! When are we to be free from such nonsense, and be men? The shame is that such a paper as the New York Tribune should talk in this way. If they did but know it, Mr. Sumner's speech will do more good to their cause than all their newspaper twaddle and trimming, and playing hide-and-seek with slavery.

"But whether it will help their party cause or not, is quite a subordinate question: there it is, — a great offering from the first and noblest man in our American life, on behalf of truth and righteousness."

And the following was written to Mr. Parker:

November, 1854. "You refer to our present politics. Dear me, what a hodge-podge of grimace and blarney and humbug we have! Yet I think good may come out of it all, by breaking up the old stereotyped organizations, from which nothing was to be hoped but more and more truckling to the Slave Power. I sometimes get very weary of all interest in these matters, — the actual world about me, — and wish to steal away into the world of spiritual abstractions. There is a fine grandeur in the old Teutonic mystic's lines: —

'Wem Zeit ist wie Ewigkeit
Und Ewigkeit wie Zeit,
Der ist befreit
Von allem Streit.' *

"But it will not do: this thorny, empirical present, this fighting world around us, will have us, and to a great extent ought to have us."

But we have not yet gathered up all the gentle and lovable qualities which belong to a complete portraiture of the

* Written in an album by Jacob Behmen: —

"Forever free
From jar is he
To whom Time as Eternity,
Eternity as Time shall be."

man. Let his own pen describe so far as it has modestly and unconsciously betrayed them.

1850. "Sophocles, in a choral ode of the Coloneus, in a touching allusion to the miseries of his own old age, speaks of

ἀπροσόμιλον
γῆρας ἄφιλον, —

a lonely old age without friends.

"I have not yet reached what is called old age; but I have lived long enough to find that the friends of earlier years are missing, and their place is not filled by others, and that a sober *afternoon* light gathers around one, very different from the flush and gayety of the forenoon light. But I think I have sometimes enjoyed a moonlight evening as much as the brightest and fairest daylight.

"Sometimes I wish that I had less of a yearning after sympathy and love, and that I could lock myself up in my own castle and care not for the world without. But I cannot, and, what is more, ought not. If the Christian hope blesses me, I shall never be ἄφιλος; for there is a Friend that never faileth."

The death of his mother took place in 1814, when she was only forty-eight years of age. The reflections of her

son at a later date prove how much she must have been to him.

1852. "On Thursday of this week was the annual Thanksgiving. I had no engagement to preach, so I walked to Medford. After the service, I went to the scenes of my childhood, the places about my father's house, and lingered there a good while. The boys were playing at football, as I did with others on the same spot forty-five or forty-six years ago. A crowd of youthful recollections came over me and chained me to the spot. The world of that day, which seemed to have sunk under the tide of time, came up again, and lived as fresh as it were yesterday. There is to me an inexpressible charm in such remembrances: they have a deep tinge of melancholy. I think the sadness is more than the joy: but it is a sweet sadness.

"Then I went to my mother's grave, in a retired part of the old burying-ground. 'Mrs. Susannah, wife of Mr. Convers Francis, died May 7, 1814. Aged 48.' How much those words said to me! I stood there and wept like a child. I may well say like a child; for it was as a little child that I stood by the grave of a dear, dear good mother. That early world of love and kind care all came

back: my mother was with me again, and all that she did for me had the freshness of boyhood's feelings upon it again: acts of affection and of self-sacrificing toil for me returned one after another, like heavenly visitants. They *were* heavenly visitants. Blessed and dear mother, hadst thou lived to be with me now, how much better would I requite thy love than I did then!

"Cowper's exquisite lines on 'The Receipt of his Mother's Picture' came to mind with new beauty and force. The tears were in my eyes, and my heart was full all the way on my walk back to Cambridge."

His father died in 1856, having reached the age of ninety.

"My father was for a great many years the most intensely industrious man, I think, that I ever knew. He devoted himself to his work with an eagerness and an unsparing exertion of strength which used to seem to me prodigious. He was sturdy, sometimes rough, but kind and faithful. He had good common-sense, and a well-balanced judgment: his education had been very scanty, but he was always fond of reading, and picked up considerable information. His opinions sometimes became prejudices, and were strong. He was a great lover of right and freedom. The sound of the old Revolution, in which

his father was a soldier, was still in his ears, and he detested slavery, with all its apologists and in all its forms. It was pleasant to hear him say, two or three weeks before his death, 'I rejoice that my first Presidential vote was given for General Washington, and now my last for Colonel Fremont.'"

Dr. Francis had a real and deep love of nature; it did not spring from a knowledge of the secrets of woods and fields, nor of the great features which declare the periods of the earth's antiquity by upheaving its monumental dates into all the colors and shadows of the day. But it was a childlike feeling of the nearness of God. He was not a student of Nature's languages, but an intuitive disciple of their meanings.

"How the calm beauty of Nature shames our petty anxieties and cares: she travels her round of loveliness and magnificence, and seems ever to say, 'Cannot you trust in that Infinite whose language I am?'"

When Whitsunday blushed with the apple-blossoms, he wrote to a favorite niece: "It is a fresh wonder, as much as if it were the first spring I ever beheld: it is just as new and glorious and beautiful as if it had come from heaven this moment for the first time."

"Nature is the gentlest and kindest nurse of the heart, and the more we love her, the more we secure the means of a quiet happiness.

"I am glad to hear of your morning walks: they are as salutary for the mind as for the body. I have this spring walked a great deal, and frequently five or six miles before breakfast. There is no enjoyment equal to it; I seem to lose myself in the Spirit of the universe."

We can see why Wordsworth should have been his favorite poet. He said once of this poetry: "It asks for itself the calmest and purest hours of the spirit, and then it reveals its power gently but deeply to the soul, and is seen to be interwoven with all that is beautiful and holy in God's universe, all that is spotless and tranquil in human affection, and all that is elevated and spiritual in the tendencies of our nature. To describe it in a few words, I should say it is a reflection of gentle loveliness and simple truthfulness in the outward and inward world."

His humorous indignation is conceivable when he called upon a neighbor who displayed in her room a fine cluster of little apples on a single stem. "'Those are very handsome,' said I. 'Yes,' said she, 'they are very pretty *for nature*, — almost as handsome as *wax-work!*'"

August, 1857. "I rose at half past three; took a long walk, and surrendered myself to the impressions of the hour. I seemed to be alone with God in this lovely universe; and the first faint tinge of the dawn, just undulating over the hills, was a reflection from the 'light of His countenance.'

"Perhaps no hour affords so much true pleasure even to the senses as this. The eye is refreshed by the soft and gentle light, gradually deepening its blush, and unveiling while it enriches the near and distant landscape. There is no light to be compared with it. The ear is charmed with the blending of diverse sounds, all 'discoursing excellent music,' — the song of the awakened birds, the 'shrill clarion' of the cock which comes piercing the silence from afar, the gurgle of near water and the hum of the fall at a distance, the occasional ringing and jolting of some wagon, early on its way to the city market, the perpetual whispering of the leaves to each other as the wind kisses them gently, — truly there are no voices like the mingled voices of a summer's morning. They remind me of the talk which hope and fancy used to hold with me in the hour of unconscious childhood. The smell is regaled with a fragrance which belongs to no other

time, springing thousand-fold from flowers, grasses, trees, and which, as the hot day comes on, flies before it. The touch has its most refined enjoyment in the refreshing coolness with which that 'chartered libertine,' the air, embraces you all around, so that mere feeling becomes a delight."

Nothing was more attractive than the manner of Dr. Francis toward young persons. He had humor, learning, and a friendly simplicity for them. He liked to get bright minds together for reading and conversing: he had, while living here, meetings of this kind, at which he was unaffectedly wise and gay. His letters to young acquaintances seem to me to be his easiest and most charming productions.

"You don't know, dear girls, how much I owe to such young folks as you, who freshen the heart with spring-dew when it begins to grow dry. The young are sometimes good-natured enough to think that they owe everything to their elders; but I can tell them there is a great debt always accumulating on the other side. If we were to strike the balance, I am afraid we old folks should be found to owe more than we can pay."

Once at least his friendship for a young man bore impor-

tant fruit. One afternoon in April, 1832, there came to the door of the red brick house by the river a young man in homely and awkward dress, carrying a small bundle. He wanted to see the Doctor. Upon being ushered into the study, he looked delightedly at the well-filled shelves, and said, "I am told that you welcome young people, and I am come to ask if you will be kind to me and help me, for I have come to Watertown to try and keep a school. I long for books, and I long to know how to study." This was Theodore Parker, then about twenty-two years of age, fresh from school-keeping in Boston. He opened a private school in Watertown, and began to prepare himself for the Divinity School under the supervision of Dr. Francis. After Mr. Parker was settled at West Roxbury, they carried on a lively correspondence upon all the subjects which were then engrossing the minds of liberal thinkers in this neighborhood: the Grounds of Authority, the Composition of the Pentateuch, the Canon, the Mythical Element in the Old and New Testaments, the Nature of Christ, and the Spiritual Philosophy. Mr. Parker had some pages of his journal headed with "Questions to ask Dr. Francis"; and there was a perfectly frank and liberal interchange of suggestion

and interpretation upon all high topics between the two scholars. Said Mr. Parker: "Your letters are like what the Preacher says of the words of wise men, — 'They are as goads,' for they stimulate and make one ashamed of his ignorance and sloth; 'as nails fastened,' for they stay where they are put, and so become standards of reckoning and reference."

Here follow a few traces of their intercourse.

June 21, 1837. "Attended Mr. Parker's ordination at Spring Street, where I preached the sermon, under the irksome influence of a hoarse cold, but succeeded in the attempt to speak better than I anticipated. Mr. Stetson of Medford gave a capital Charge, and George Ripley of Boston an exquisitely written Right Hand. It was altogether a pleasing and well-ordered affair, quiet, modest and in good taste. I liked it better than any ordination I have attended for a long time."

It is not every acorn, thus quietly and modestly dropped within its rural precinct, that lifts such robust and many-spreading arms, through which suns filter and dews drip, and the far-travelled wind roars and threatens.

July 31. "At noon Mr. T. Parker, now settled at Spring Street, called. We talked of literary and theologi-

cal projects. He mentioned a plan which he had in this respect, and said that when a lad he had determined to become acquainted with the literature of every known language. A gigantic project; but he is young and ardent. God speed him; a fine scholar!"

April 22, 1838. "After services, Parker came in from Waltham, and stayed till nine o'clock. Glorious man! and a glorious time my wife and I had. He talks most delightfully: such richness of thought, such warmth of heart, such inexhaustible information. His intellectual affluence exceeds that of any man I know, not only among his coevals, but among all others. The rapid expansion and powerful development of his mind, since he first came to me as a schoolmaster, have been matter of amazement to me. God bless him, and spare his life to us."

June 13, 1841. "I find there is a great hue and cry about Parker's sermon at the ordination of Mr. Shackford: he is accused of infidelity, &c., — the old song over again; and one writer in the Puritan recommends that he be prosecuted under the law of the Commonwealth against blasphemy! Bravo! So mote it be! Would to God they would try their hand at this. Here is a man of

sound Christian piety, of unequalled theological attainments, of the most Christ-like spirit, who is menaced with a civil prosecution and imprisonment. Why? Because he has said we may be Christians without believing all that is written in the Old and New Testaments! This in a community boasting of its entire religious freedom! And the Unitarians, too, open full-mouthed in the cry, as well as the Orthodox!"

June 25, 1842. "Received a letter from T. Parker which made me very sad. His book (Discourse of Religion) has drawn upon him, of course, great obloquy, and he complains bitterly of being cut off from fellowship and kindness. That he should be treated unkindly by Unitarians, whose doctrine is individual freedom, is abominable. But I find a great deal to regret in Parker's book, the more so because I love and admire the man so much. The spirit of it *seems* to be bad, derisive, sarcastic, arrogant, — contemptuous of what the wise and good hold sacred; nothing of all this did he mean, I am persuaded, — but it has that appearance. I wish very much that he had reserved the publication of it till years had brought more consideration.

"Yet perhaps it is his destiny to become a reformer, and

all this sharpness may be necessary to it. But I cannot sympathize with *it*, though nobody can think more highly of *him* as a pious man, and a rich, ripe scholar, than I do."

The intercourse of the two friends was interrupted during 1842 by the decision of Dr. Francis to recall an engagement for exchanging with Mr. Parker, in consequence of the advice which he received from persons connected with the College, on occasion of his acceptance of the Parkman Professorship. This circumstance, so well known to all the friends of Mr. Parker, must be mentioned here, as an act of simple fidelity to both parties, — to Mr. Parker, who felt deeply wounded at this defection of his ancient friend and teacher, and to Dr. Francis, who thought that he must lend an ear to considerations connected with the University with whose interests his labors were henceforth to be identified. A subsequent arrangement was made by Dr. Francis to supply the pulpit in Spring Street during Mr. Parker's first absence in Europe.

Their intercourse was very soon renewed, and it grew warm and friendly again; for Mr. Parker, after the first sad and embittered moments, nobly renewed his recollec-

tions of all that was genuine and liberal in the mind of his first instructor.*

FROM MR. PARKER.

February 22, 1858. "It does me good always to see even your handwriting on the outside of a letter before I open it. How much instruction I have to thank you for, it is only I that know. When I lived at West Roxbury and you at Watertown, both of us had more leisure than we are likely to find again, and many and many a good time did I have with you. I have walked on the strength thereof for many a forty days since. So if I don't often see you, don't think I am likely to forget the help I once had from your learning, — which none that I know equals, — and from the liberal direction of your thought."

The last letters which passed between the two friends preserve their best characteristics, and fitly close the memorial of their earthly intercourse.

FROM DR. FRANCIS.

"Cambridge, Feb. 2, 1859.

"Dear Parker: — I hear you are to leave your home

* See many letters of Mr. Parker to Dr. Francis, written between 1842 and 1856, in the forthcoming Life and Correspondence of Theodore Parker.

and your friends this week for the West Indies; and I would not have you leave us without offering, in this way, my most affectionate good-by and prayer for your health and happiness. It would have given me very great satisfaction to have taken you by the hand, and to have said the parting word; but I found, on calling at your house at different times, that you could not and ought not run the risk of seeing company.

"Your hearty kindness, so long and so abundantly experienced, is a deeply cherished remembrance with me, and I hope I am to enjoy it again, if you shall deem me worthy of it. I have learned much, very much, that is great and good from you; and with all my heart I thank you for it. Your noble life and noble instructions have taught us all the full meaning of that great saying of Plato, ὅπῃ ἂν ὁ λόγος ὥσπερ πνεῦμα φέρῃ, ταύτῃ ἰτέον,* and how poor do differences of opinion seem in the presence of the Eternal Truth, of which they are but the flickering shadows. No man can have a more supporting sense than yourself, of having performed a great and good labor with righteousness of purpose and with singleness of

* From the Republic: "Wherever the Logos (or right Reason) would bear us on, as a wind, there we must follow."

mind, 'as under the great Taskmaster's eye.' The loving Father, I know, will sustain and lift you up, whatever may betide. To the arms of his love we all commit you with truest sympathies and with heart-uttered prayers. We remember what a sage of old so finely said, — 'The memorial of virtue is immortal, because it is known with God and with men: when it is present, men take example at it, and when it is gone, they desire it; it weareth a crown and triumpheth forever, having gotten the victory, striving for undefiled rewards.'

"May every breeze, dear Parker, be the breath of health and strength to your frame; and may every day's sun shine upon you as a genial, cheering, life-giving power. The dear God, I trust, will return you to us with a restoration of that strength which you have so lavishly expended for others; and if I am then among the living, no one will welcome you back with a more sincere joy.

"Farewell. God bless you, and keep you in the arms of his love.

"Yours, most truly,

"CONVERS FRANCIS."

TO DR. FRANCIS.

"February 3, 1859.

"I am sorry to leave the country on a journey of un-

certain duration, and do not like to depart without a word to you. I have much to thank you for. In my earlier life at Watertown your devotion to letters, and your diligent study of the best thoughts and the highest themes, offered an example which both stimulated and encouraged me. Then your sermons, always generous and liberal, well-studied and rich in thought, and bearing marks of the learning of the preacher as well as his religion, were a cheer and a solace, while they abounded in instruction. I admired also the faithfulness with which you did your duty to all the parish, — rich and poor, — and your hearty sympathy with all common men in their common pursuits. I have rarely found such things in a minister's life; for 'Education' separates the *Scholar* from the *People*, and makes them strangers, if not foes.

"I thank you also for the interest you then took in my studies, — for the loan of books, your own and those from the College Library, which I had then no access to. I remember also with great delight, that in the conversations of the little club your learning and your voice were always on the side of Progress and Freedom of Thought. Then, too, you early took a deep, warm interest in the antislavery enterprise, when its friends were few, feeble, and despised;

and you helped the great cause of human Freedom not merely by word and work, but by the silent and subtle force of example, which sometimes is worth more than all the words and works of a man; for while they may fail, I think the other never does.

"Let me thank you, too, for the many wise letters you have written me while at home and while abroad. They still live in my memory as a joy which it is pleasant to recall. I leave America with hopes of returning a sounder and laborious man, to live long and useful years; but you know how fallacious are the hopes of a consumptive man. I do not trust them, but leave the shore as if I should never see it again. I am not sad at this pause or ending of my work. Heaven is as near at forty-eight as at ninety, — the age of my uncle to whom I bade farewell to-day. I am equal to either fate, though both my wish and my will incline me to the earthly life.

"I congratulate you on your sound body and your unfailing health, which are not less your acquisition than your inheritance. Remember me kindly to your wife and family, and believe me

"Faithfully yours,

"T. P."

When the academic term opened in 1863, Dr. Francis found himself so much enfeebled by the progress of the malady which he had hardly noticed hitherto, except at rare intervals, and had never very seriously considered, that he could no longer visit the lecture-room with comfort. For a few weeks the classes waited upon him at his house, where he struggled through the prescribed exercises with them.

At this time his thoughts often reverted to his old parishioners; and one day, when his niece called to take him to ride, and asked him whither he would be carried, he replied, "O, take me up to see old Leonard Stone; he is very sick, and we may never meet again." He rode up to the house, and, being unable to alight, as his old friend was unable to come out to greet him, he sat waving his hand to the invalid at his window, and so they bade each other a silent farewell.

Thus the pallor of disease fell upon that ruddy and well-knit frame, out of which of late all his gentle qualities breathed in such an Indian summer that December seemed impossible. It was nearer than anybody thought, but the mellowness of that fine character endured as long as the body was capable of influence. The youthfulness was not

to be tired down: it seemed to come to the hand of a friend as agile as a bird which you call. It broke out of the stupor of one of the last days, when a beloved relative brought a token of her attachment to the bed upon which he was supposed to be sunk in unconsciousness. He roused and exclaimed, "What, strawberries and flowers! — they bring June back to me!" This was his latest impression from the nature that he loved with almost boyish warmth.

"The last day of his consciousness he was in a very serene state of mind. 'I have not a want in the world,' said he to his sister. She replied, 'That is a blessed state, dear brother.' 'Yes, it *is* blessed,' said he, 'and I thank God for it.' Afterwards, when he was dozing, she heard him murmur, 'Blessings upon blessings!'"

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